



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20410-0001

THE SECRETARY

November 18, 2019

The Honorable Maxine Waters
Chairwoman
Committee on Financial Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Chairwoman:

My mother always taught me that people shouldn't throw rocks, especially while they live in a glass house. Because of that wise lesson, I was a little surprised to read your hostile letter to President Trump regarding the record number of homeless Americans in California, particularly in your district.

Indeed, shamelessness exists in Washington. Shamelessness is a career politician of 30 years laying blame. Shamelessness is allowing more than 55,000 Americans to live on the very streets they represent. Shamelessness is allowing anyone other than a biological female into a battered women's shelter.

As the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, solving the homelessness crisis is a top priority for myself, for President Trump, and for his Administration. To that end, I have sent multiple letters to your office and requested numerous meetings, but each time you've refused. Basic manners elude you and it seems that instead of producing results, you're more interested in producing cheap headlines at the President's expense – like a true career politician. Unfortunately, those homeless men and women don't have that same luxury.

As you may know, we are in the draft stages of releasing the national "Point-in-Time" homelessness count data, and the records indicate that the rate of homelessness is dropping all across the country, with the glaring exception of California. In fact, around a quarter of the total U.S. homeless population is in California – over 130,000 people. About half of the nation's unsheltered homeless population sleeps on the streets of California, and Los Angeles alone is home to a staggering one in five of the country's unsheltered homeless population. San Francisco's rate of unsheltered homelessness is 10 times higher than the overall U.S. rate. To make matters worse – if that's even possible – if Los Angeles were a state, it would rank number two behind California itself for the highest number of homeless veterans. If you want to pen a scathing letter to anyone, it should be addressed to your Governor or Mayor for not treating homelessness with the urgency it requires.

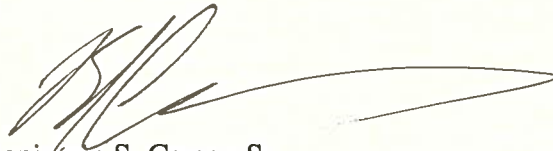
To me, the most compassionate, obvious, and logical solution would be to get as many homeless Americans off the streets – with a roof over their heads – as soon as humanly possible. I think we can both agree that our nation’s homeless men and women have seen enough devastation. We must focus less on politically driven words and more on effective solutions – like healing those struggling with mental health issues and substance abuse addictions – which would create opportunities to empower individuals to rise to self-sufficiency and live with dignity. Everyone falls from time to time; for those who have fallen especially hard, the most effective, benevolent and dignified solution is to create more paths for people to take control of their lives and their futures.

The most important thing we can do at the Federal level for housing affordability is provide for a thriving economy where jobs are growing, wages are rising, and unemployment is falling. Thanks to President Trump’s policies, that is exactly what we have today – a booming economy.

Speaking of positive actions, the White House’s report, *The State of Homelessness in America*, both explicitly and implicitly addresses the central role of affordable housing in ending homelessness. For example, page 32 of the report states that “One of the major factors that increases homelessness is regulation that impedes home construction, which reduces the supply of homes and thus increases homelessness.” The White House Council on Eliminating Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing, which I chair, is working hard to solve that very problem. This basic law of supply and demand is fundamental and nonpartisan, which is why many other housing solutions promoted by this Administration, such as Opportunity Zones and technological innovation, have enjoyed bipartisan support across the country.

I would love to work with you, in a bipartisan fashion, to solve this crisis. It may not be popular with the political elites, but working to give people a hand up, instead of a hand-out will actually have meaning and not just be the typical response of career politicians in Washington. I hope to hear from you soon.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Carson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Benjamin S. Carson Sr.